

The KGB and The United Nations

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***Soviet Subversion and
Intelligence Operations
in the United Nations
Secretariat***



By Lawrence B. Sulc

THE NATHAN HALE INSTITUTE

***“I wish to be useful, and every kind
of service necessary to the public
good becomes honorable by being
necessary. If the exigencies of
my country demand a peculiar
service, its claims to perform that
service are imperious.”***

**—Capt. Nathan Hale
1755–1776**

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Soviet Subversion and Intelligence Operations in the United Nations Secretariat

Approximately one-quarter of the Soviet nationals employed by the United Nations are Soviet intelligence officers. Although it is a violation of Article 100 of the UN Charter for any UN employee to "seek or receive any instruction from any government," all Soviet UN employees report to the Soviet government, receive instructions from that government and surrender to it their UN salaries. From the Soviet government these UN employees receive their Soviet-scale salaries which are, of course, lower than those paid by the UN. Rather than being international civil servants, as the founders of the UN intended, they are in fact Soviet officials, in violation of UN rules, assigned to the UN. Those Soviet employees who are actually intelligence officers, use their UN positions as cover to facilitate their intelligence assignments. Other Soviet employees of the UN are available, of course, for intelligence tasks when needed. They are "co-opted," to use intelligence parlance, and are not free to refuse to cooperate when "asked." Most Soviet-bloc countries follow the same procedures in the UN as the Soviets.

According to a report of the United States Executive Branch, released in mid-1985 by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI), "[t]he Soviet Union is effectively using the UN Secretariat for the conduct of its foreign relations, and the West is paying for most of it." "The Soviets," the report said, "have gained significant advantage over the West...to achieve Soviet foreign policy and intelligence objectives." Yet, the report goes on, "no comprehensive effort has been undertaken by the United Nations to enforce UN Charter and Secretariat staff regulations that prohibit employees from acting on behalf of their government."

The Soviet Union's objectives in the United Nations are to:

- promote Soviet interests,
- spread Soviet propaganda,
- conduct operations to influence foreign individuals, groups and governments,
- conduct intelligence operations.

These objectives can be divided into two basic areas of activity, "influence" and "intelligence collection," or, put another way, *lobbying* and *information gathering*.

Influence

Soviet citizens employed by the UN Secretariat are able, by virtue of their UN positions, to:

- shape conference papers,
- control the flow of news and information,
- influence delegations seeking Secretariat advice,
- aid Soviet diplomats during deliberations,
- support Soviet propaganda,
- arrange for the UN Secretary General to make references favorable to the Soviet Union,
- enter pro-Soviet documents into UN records, which later become Soviet propaganda placements as UN positions,
- place Soviet personnel in UN offices responsible for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Soviet front groups which, in turn, influence UN debate and the policies of UN member governments.

Intelligence

Intelligence operations are carried out by personnel of the KGB and GRU (Soviet military intelligence) assigned to the UN Secretariat (in addition to, and coordinated with, those assigned to the Soviet Mission to the UN). Their UN positions permit them to:

- collect information on the activities of the UN, especially early warning of possible UN actions,
- collect information on the countries to which they are posted, especially political, scientific and technical information,
- collect information on third countries,

- spot, assess and recruit agents, both employees of the UN with whom they come in contact and citizens of the countries to which they are assigned or to which they travel,
- support intelligence operations in the host country, in nearby countries and worldwide.

The Soviet party and government, with the KGB playing the lead role, is able to:

- influence hiring and promotion decisions within the UN civil service, advancing those persons willing to assist the Soviet Union and isolating certain others,
- influence UN components (the UN Department of Public Information (DPI) is a good example. It conducts Soviet active measures operations, including "lobbying" the U.S. Congress and promotes anti-Western activities. The DPI is effectively run by a KGB colonel).

Soviet espionage activities conducted by its UN personnel include, for example, electronic monitoring of Americans' telephone conversations, directed primarily from the Soviet UN mansion in Glen Cove, New York. Defense-related companies on Long Island are among the targets. Other intelligence activities include operations to support "illegals," Soviet or bloc intelligence officers assigned abroad with false identities.

During the Carter Administration, on September 13, 1979, Assistant Secretary of State C. William Maynes testified before a subcommittee of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs that foreign intelligence activities at the UN were "within permissible limits." The present administration has a less benign and much more realistic view, as the SSCI report, cited above, makes clear.

"The United Nations offers so many opportunities for spying that many intelligence organizations reportedly use it as an intelligence training ground for junior diplomats," the *New York Times* reported on September 5, 1979. U.S. counterintelligence is obviously correspondingly intense. The same *Times* article speculated on how it became known that Andrew Young, then U.S. Ambassador to the UN, was in touch with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) representative to the UN. The clandestine contact, contrary to U.S. policy, led to Young's dismissal. One of the theories broached, according to the *Times*, was that the FBI, watching "the PLO or the Kuwaitis, caught an American [Ambassador Young] in their net by chance."

Inasmuch as the United States pays about 25 percent of the United Nations' total budget, approximately 20 million dollars of U.S. appropriated funds are transferred into the hands of the Soviet government each year. In 1985 Representative Don Sundquist (R.-Tenn.) introduced an amendment in the House of Representatives to prohibit the practice of "kickbacks" which, according to the Congressman, provide for indirect United States financing of KGB UN operations in this country. The amendment became law. A report from the U.S. State Department on the problem is pending. The Congressman hopes that the U.S. will enforce its law and the UN will enforce its charter and that the illegal Soviet practice will thus be stopped. If it is not, the law provides for the United States to reduce its contribution to the UN.

In addition to the foregoing, the Congress in 1985 imposed on Soviet citizens working for the UN the same travel and other restrictions applied to Soviets assigned to Soviet installations in the United States—the Embassy, Soviet consulates and trade missions.

Manipulation of the United Nations by the Soviet Union is intensified by Soviet penetration of the UN Secretariat by Soviet and bloc citizens. Supposedly international civil servants, they manifestly are not. Soviet officials, seconded to the international agencies for tours of duty abroad, they work under Soviet orders. Many Soviet UN employees are Soviet intelligence officers—principally KGB. They use their UN positions to carry out intelligence assignments within (and against) the UN, within (and against) their countries of assignment, and within (and against) other countries. Their UN passports give them special status and special access. They are international "diplomats," if you will, whose real nationality is often not known to the unsuspecting persons with whom they are in touch. One of their many intelligence assignments is "illegal" support—the handling of "illegals," including illegal "sleepers," throughout the world. The principal target country, or the "main enemy" to use the Soviet term, is, of course, the United States.

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